



# **PRESS RELEASE**

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## **For Immediate Release**

June 27, 2003

### **ARMED CAREER CRIMINAL PLEADS GUILTY IN**

### **"PROJECT SAFE NEIGHBORHOODS" FIREARMS CASE**

United States Attorney Paul I. Perez today announced that **SAMUEL WATSON, 25**, of Oveido, pleaded guilty to a federal firearms charge arising from his arrest by federal agents on September 5, 2002. A grand jury previously had indicted Watson on the charge of Possession of a Firearm by a Convicted Felon on April 16, 2003. Watson faces a mandatory minimum prison sentence of 15 years up to life imprisonment, a term of supervised release of up to five years, a maximum fine of \$250,000 and a \$100 special assessment.

According to court documents at the plea hearing, Watson possessed two firearms, a Ruger Mini-14 rifle and a Norinco MAK-90 Sporter rifle, when he was arrested by federal agents on an outstanding warrant on September 5, 2002. Watson has prior felony convictions in the State of Florida for Carrying a Concealed Weapon, Aggravated Assault, Aggravated Fleeing & Eluding and Possession of Cocaine. As a previously convicted felon, he is prohibited from possessing firearms under federal law and is considered an armed career criminal because of the nature of his prior convictions.

The case represents the culmination of a cooperative effort between the United States Attorney's Office, the State Attorney's Office for Brevard/Seminole Counties, the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA), the Seminole County Sheriff's Office, and the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF). It is another case prosecuted as a part the Department of Justice program "Project Safe Neighborhoods" - a nationwide gun violence reduction initiative with strong support from ATF. United States Attorney Paul I. Perez is coordinating the cooperative effort here in the Middle District of Florida with federal, state and local law enforcement officials and calling our effort "Project Safe Neighborhoods - Operation HALT the Violence!" The objective is to reduce violent crime by locating and seizing unlawfully possessed guns and then swiftly prosecuting the offenders using both federal and state gun laws.

The case was prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorney Robert E. Bodnar, Jr.